

March 25, 2009

TO: Representative Mike Milbourn, Chairman and  
Members of House Natural Resources Committee

TESTIMONY ON SJ 21, Joint resolution on U.S. Forest Service Galton Study Area

**I request a "YES" vote on this Joint Resolution**

The Galton project is a continuation of the ongoing governmental practices conducted over 20 years of ongoing forest management devoid of an officially established and approved plan with public input and approval. The results have led far from the mission and goals originally established in the Organic Act of 1997 through which these lands had been set aside as forest reserves for public use. Provisions of this Act were to improve and protect the forest with the purpose of securing favorable water flows, and to furnish a continuous supply of timber for the use and necessities of citizens.

Ever since the founding of the Wildland Project, a dream introduced by Dave Foreman, precipitated changed management policies which have been closing down human access, use and enjoyment of these lands. As a result hazardous fuels have built up in forests resulting in massive destructive wildfires, burning of thousands of acres of timber including old growth, treasured wildlife and endangered species, lost watersheds and soil quality, and unhealthy air and water pollution.

The over 10-year march toward ever more wilderness has been on-going since the original Wildlands bill HR 488 was introduced in 1999 followed by numerous more similar bills, rulings and policies. Piece by piece, bit by bit, in various forms these all have led to ever more wilderness and/or non-use of land. **The current Congressional Northern Rockies Ecosystem bill, H.R. 980 would, if passed, add 26 million acres of wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, wildland recovery areas, and connecting corridors to the already established Wildlands Project areas of five Northwestern states.**

The Forest Service has continued this mission with their proposed Galton Project for the Winton Weydemeyer area of 171 acres which, by their own mapping, indicated this had for many years been planned as Wilderness. As indicated on the attached maps this is only a portion of the far bigger plan, with little or no exposure to the general public. Eventually wilderness (or park) would extend all along the western border of Glacier National Park down to Whitefish Mountain (formerly Big Mountain ski area) five miles from Whitefish and then east to Columbia Falls.

Planners envision this area to become a new national park already named Flathead National Park. Some 200 private property owners along the North Fork of Flathead River would then basically become in-holders. The unofficial "Northern Rockies Ecosystem (NREPA) map of two years ago, produced by these same groups, includes this new national park as well as one in Oregon/Idaho of about 500,000 acres.

These extreme special interest groups promoting this extensive governmental land acquisition are funded by international foundations and other sources that do not represent the majority of Montana residents. They are influencing the agencies within the federal government such as the U.S. Forest Service, the Fish Wildlife and Parks and Bureau of Land Management to acquire ever more land and to manage in a manner not beneficial to either the general public or to the land itself, basically that of "management by neglect". Our government simply cannot afford proper management of all this land mass as exemplified by the Hands-off, Let Burn policies now being applied. Taxpayers simply cannot afford fighting these fires or the restoration following. The forests actually could finance their own fire prevention and forest health maintenance if they were allowed to do so through productive utilization of the biomass materials which are now burning. It is restrictive forest policy which prevents this from happening.

Included in this movement have been severe restrictions on adjoining privately owned properties as well as the establishment of wildlife corridors designed to connect federal land masses. As we increasingly lose our already scarce private land to government we lose our tax base, our natural resources and our economy. The custom and culture of our citizens is being destroyed and our quality of life eroding. The area is becoming the playground of the nation and ultimately of the world, but revenues thus derived are far short of that needed to maintain the quality of life needed for our people. The citizens of the western states must realize how and why our way of life is being threatened.

Montana residents must be allowed greater influence and control over their own public lands utilizing the expertise of those with knowledge and experience in proper land management. We must take every precaution possible to protect what is left of our private property, the foundation of a prosperous secure future while benefiting from the resources that had been granted us by the federal government. If done properly these forests and its wildlife will also benefit by assuring healthy, bug-free, fire free conditions.

**I highly recommend a "yes" vote on Senator Aubyn Curtiss's SJ 21 joint resolution on forest service study area for the Galton area. It will provide the guidelines and procedures to restore and preserve a healthy forest. Hopefully this can become a model for improved Forest management throughout our country.**

Respectfully submitted by

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**March 25, 2009**

Chairman Mike Milburn, and Members of the House Natural Resource Committee

**RE: Pass SJ 21**

As the last sawmill in Lincoln County is permanently closed at Fortine, MT, well over 100 good paying jobs to support and run the mill are gone for good as well as the infrastructure and equipment tax base necessary to support those wealth producing industrial jobs. Montana already competes with South Dakota and Mississippi as having the lowest average annual wage per job in the nation (73% of the national average).

When a sawmill is closed, the standing timber within a 25-30 mile radius is instantly devalued by the cost of hauling to the next nearest market. The lack of local timber markets devalues State Trust Land timber, reduces long term revenues to schools that must be made up by taxpayers. It is well known that the lack of timber sales from Federal land is a major factor in these mill closures as well as the skyrocketing cost of catastrophic Federal fires fueled by unbroken expanses of dead and dying timber.

The Galton project is bordered on the east by the Flathead National Forest that has already closed all the USFS land in the North Fork Flathead River to snowmobiling except for a few groomed trails on roads. Every trail into the Whitefish range on the Flathead side is closed to any motorized use. All except a few main roads in valley bottoms have been closed to motorized use or "decommissioned" so that not even a 4x4 fire truck can have access. These policies have contributed to more than half the Federal land in the North Fork Flathead being burned in the last 10 years.

The Fortine Ranger District has already implemented many road and trail closures similar to the Flathead and has amended its "roadless inventory" to include previously logged areas. It is obvious to anyone who has followed the incremental shutdown of Federal forests that the Galton Project is planned to further reduce access and management of the forest to expand wilderness recommendations and "roadless management" that dooms the area to more catastrophic fires to threaten health safety and property.

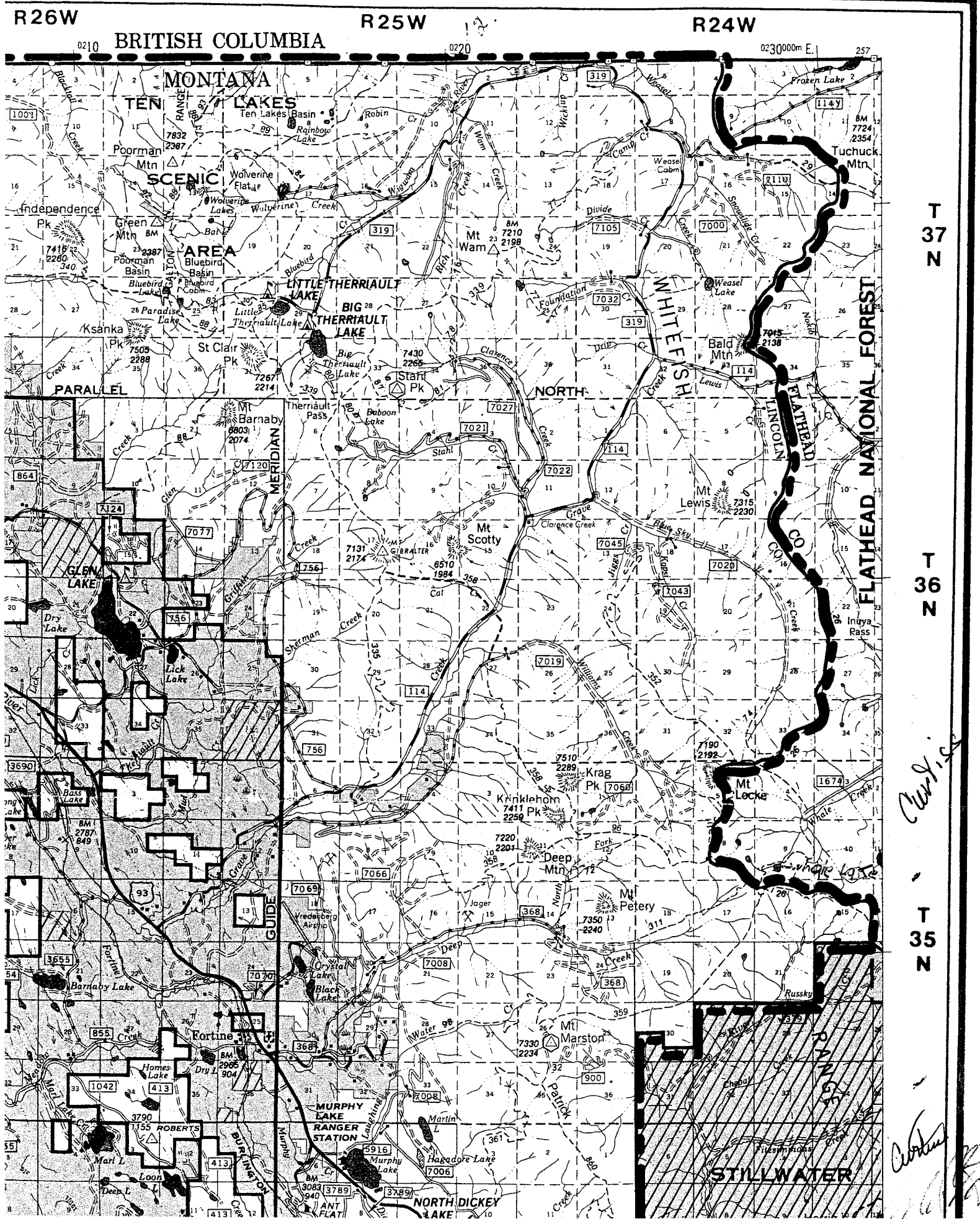
USFS monitoring reports that, even with all the motorized access reductions, existing wilderness visits accounts for less than 2% of total forest recreation visits. Montana and especially Lincoln County does not need any more wilderness.

Please support SJ 21 to send a message to the US Forest Service land managers that Montana and Lincoln County needs proper management of multiple use forests not more wilderness.

Respectfully,

Fred D. Hodgeboom, President  
Montanans For Multiple Use  
406.837-1363

1981 Kootenai National Forest Map - Galton Project Area  
Showing Roads & Recreation Sites please return



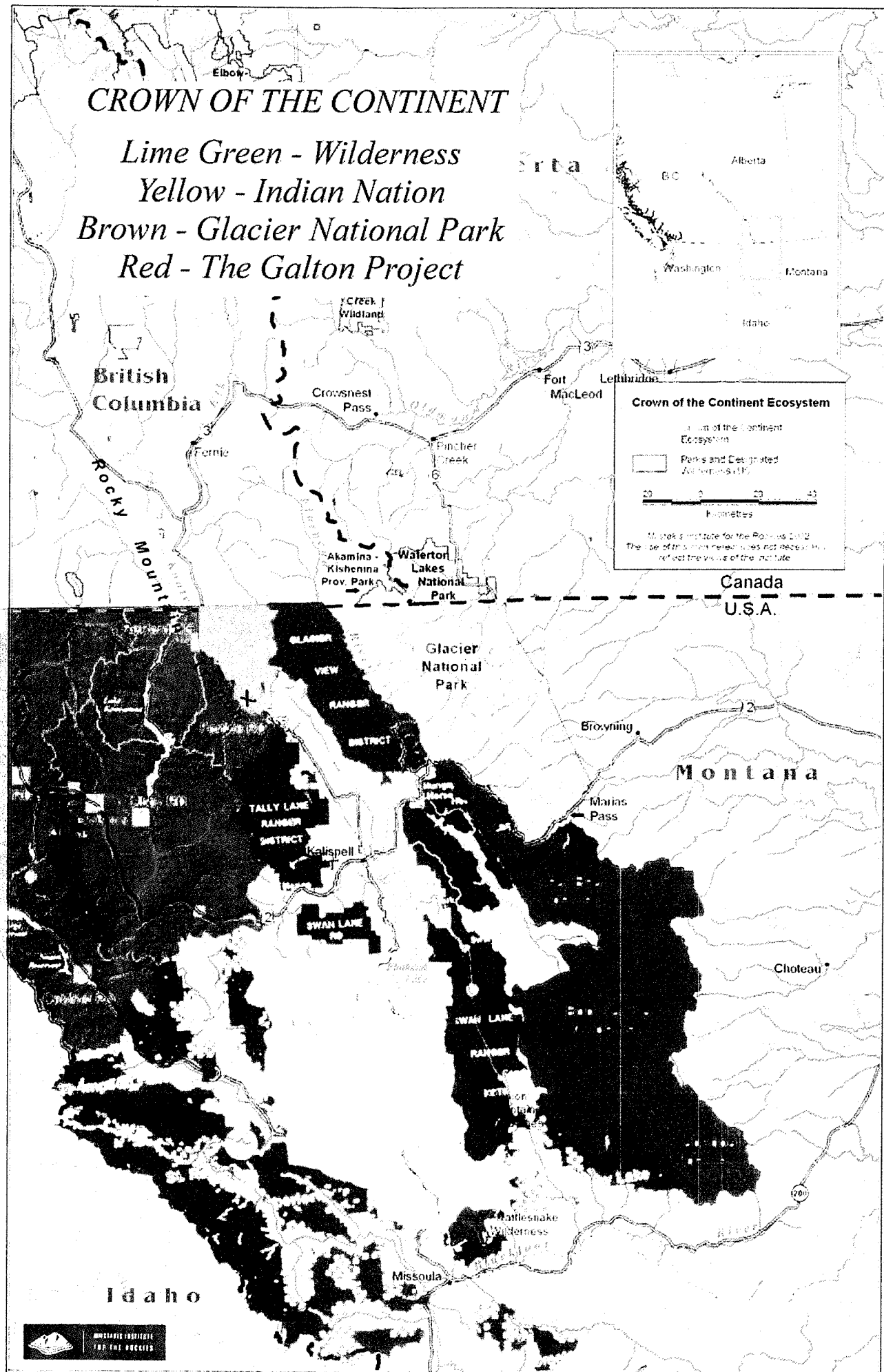
# CROWN OF THE CONTINENT

*Lime Green - Wilderness*

*Yellow - Indian Nation*

*Brown - Glacier National Park*

*Red - The Galton Project*



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